

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (original) A method of making porous near-net-shape metallic and/or ceramic parts with an open porosity of at least 10% by volume according to the steps of:

a) forming an injectable mass of metallic and/or ceramic powder, at least one thermoplastic binder, and at least one place holder;

b) injection molding the mass into the shape of the part to be produced;

c) cooling the injection-molded mass and setting it in a capillary-active material and subjecting it to a first-stage binder removal to produce an open porosity;

d) removing the place holder at least partially from the part with a fluid;

e) subjecting the part to a thermal binder-removing process;

f) subsequently sintering the part.

2. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the place holder is NaCl, KCl, K_2CO_3 , or Na_2CO_3 .

3. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1 [[or 2]] wherein the metal powder is stainless steel, Ti, NiTi, or a titanium alloy.

4. (currently amended) The method according to ~~claims~~
claim 1 to 3 wherein between steps c) and d) there is a thermal
binder-removing step.

5. (original) The method according to claim 4 wherein
the thermal binder-removing step is conducted at a temperature up
to 270°C under a protective-gas atmosphere.

6. (currently amended) The method according to ~~claims 1~~
to claim 5 wherein the starting powder has a particle size of less
than 20 µm.

7. (currently amended) The method according to ~~claims 1~~
to claim 6 wherein the thermal binder-removing step is conducted at
a temperature up to 500°C and under a protective-gas atmosphere.

8. (currently amended) The method according to ~~claims~~
claim 2 ~~[[to 7]]~~ wherein a fluid heated up to 50°C is used.

9. (currently amended) The method according to ~~claims~~
claim 1 ~~[[to 8]]~~ wherein the fluid for removing the place holder is
water.

10. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein
a stirred water bath is used in order to remove the place holder.

11. (currently amended) The method according to ~~claims~~
claim 1 [[to 10]] wherein the thermal binder-removing step uses
argon as a protective gas.

12. (currently amended) The method according to ~~claims~~
claim 1 [[to 11]] wherein an open porosity in the part is produced
of at least 30% by volume, in particular 50% by volume.